



OSPREY AIRCRAFT OF THE ACES • 34



Italian Aces of World War 2

Giovanni Massimello and Giorgio Apostolo



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COLOUR PLATES



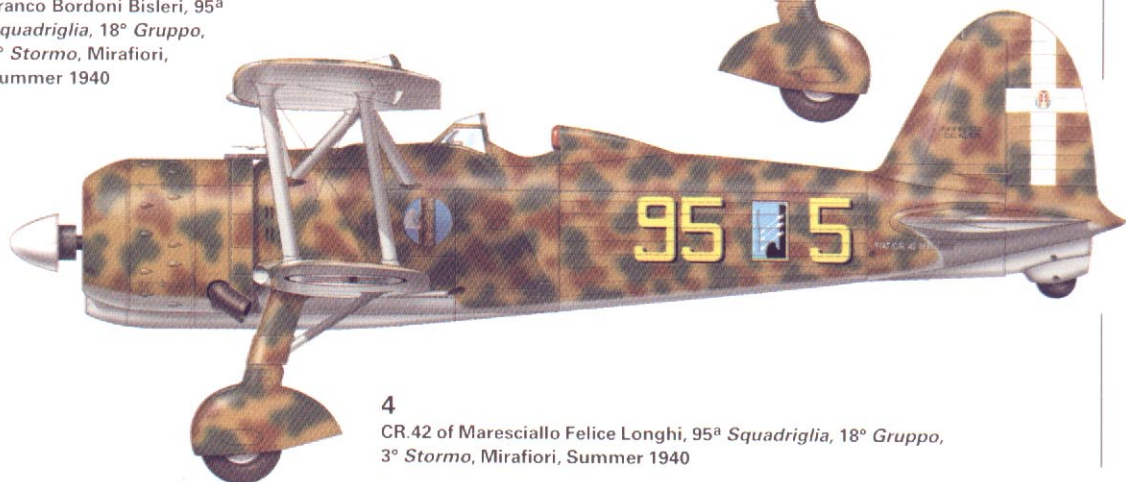
1
CR.42 of Capitano Giorgio
Graffer, CO of 365^a Squadriglia,
150^o Gruppo, 53^o Stormo,
Caselle, Summer 1940



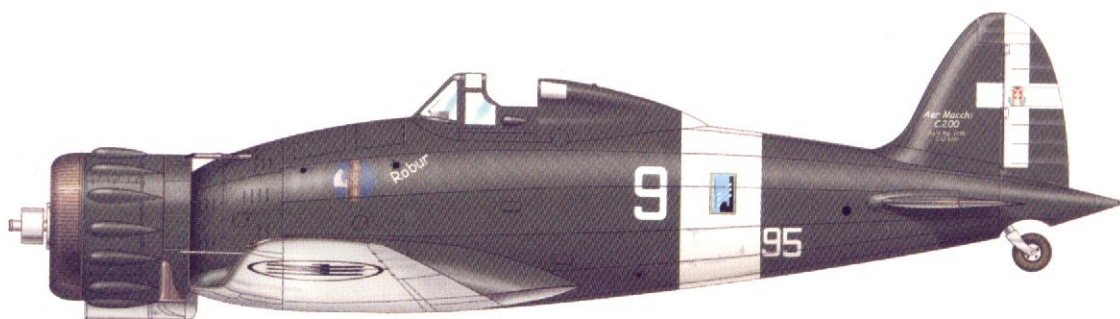
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CR.42 of Tenente Mario Visintini, 412^a Squadriglia Autonoma, Gura,
Summer 1940



3
CR.42 of Sottotenente
Franco Bordoni Bisleri, 95^a
Squadriglia, 18^o Gruppo,
3^o Stormo, Mirafiori,
Summer 1940

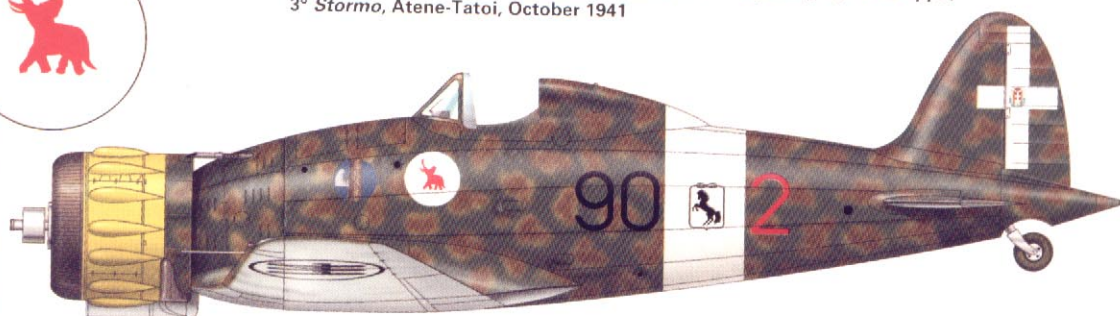


4
CR.42 of Maresciallo Felice Longhi, 95^a Squadriglia, 18^o Gruppo,
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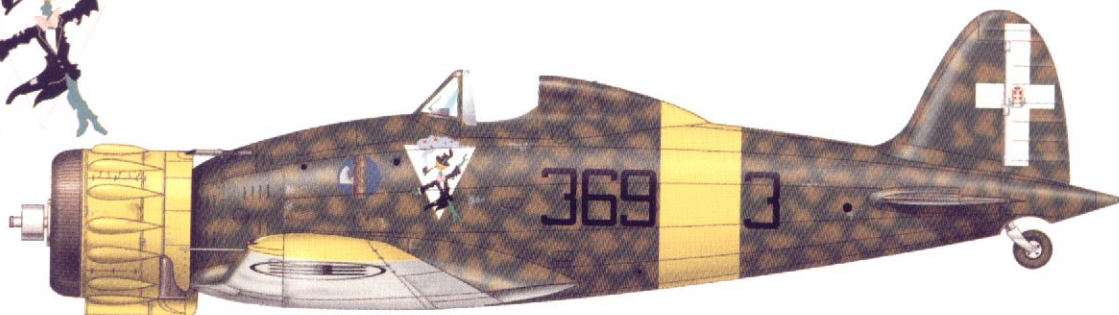
5

C.200 of Sottotenente Franco Bordoni Bisleri, 95^a Squadriglia, 18° Gruppo, 3° Stormo, Atene-Tatoi, October 1941



6

C.200 of Tenente Franco Lucchini, 90^a Squadriglia, 10° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Catania, August 1941



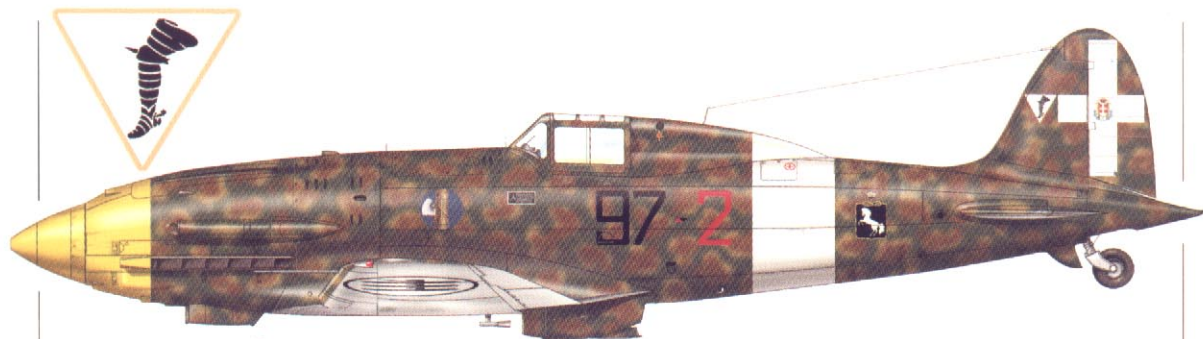
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C.200 of Sottotenente Giuseppe Biron, 369^a Squadriglia, 22° Gruppo Autonomo, Krivoj-Rog, September 1941



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C.200 of Maggiore Ettore Foschini, CO of 21° Gruppo Autonomo, Stalino, May 1942



9

C.202 Serie II MM7712 of Sottotenente Jacopo Frigerio, 97^a Squadriglia, 9° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Comiso, 30 September 1941



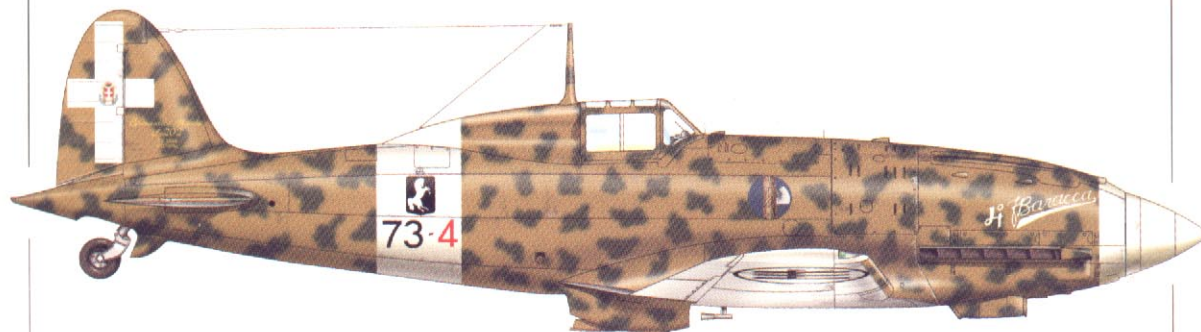
10

C.202 Serie III MM7742 of Tenente Emanuele Annoni, 96^a Squadriglia, 9° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Comiso, 14 October 1941



11

C.202 Serie III MM7720 of Capitano Franco Lucchini, CO of 84^a Squadriglia, 10° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Fuka, September 1942

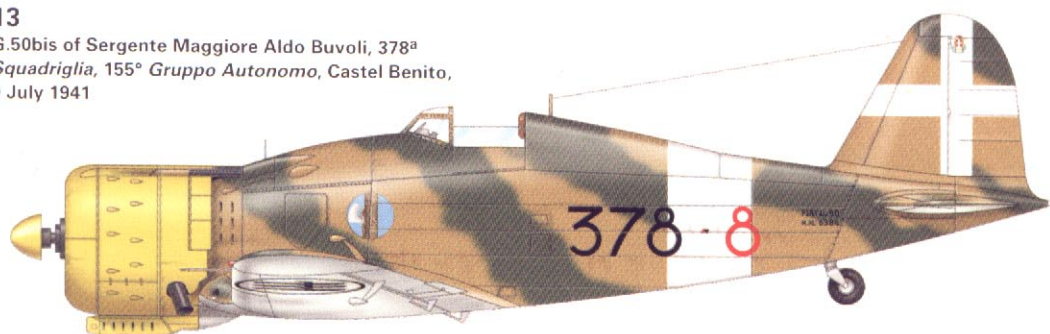


12

C.202 Serie III MM7764 of Sergente Maggiore Teresio Martinoli, 73^a Squadriglia, 9° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Gela, July 1942

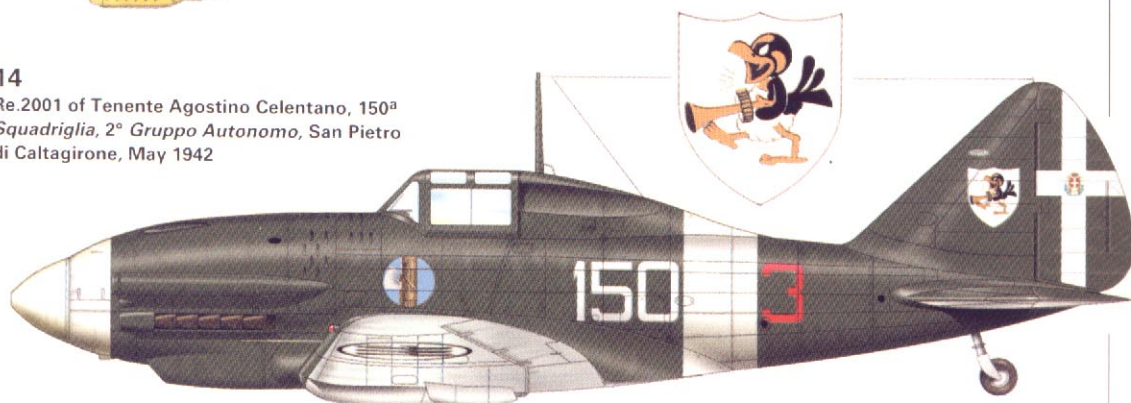
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G.50bis of Sergente Maggiore Aldo Buvoli, 378^a
Squadriglia, 155° Gruppo Autonomo, Castel Benito,
9 July 1941



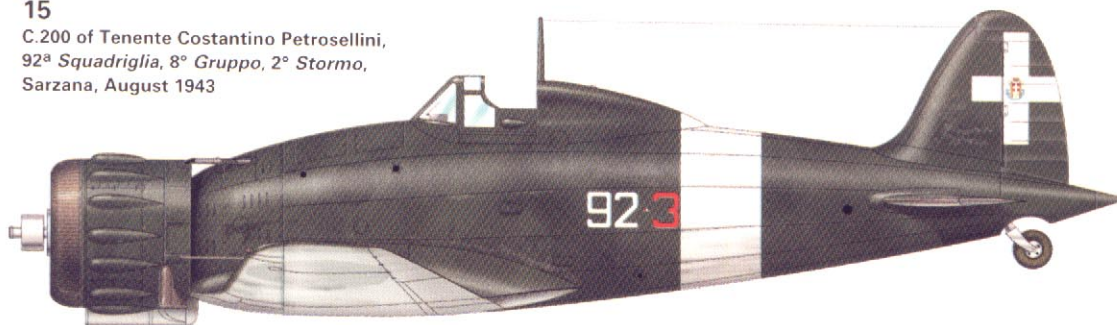
14

Re.2001 of Tenente Agostino Celentano, 150^a
Squadriglia, 2° Gruppo Autonomo, San Pietro
di Caltagirone, May 1942



15

C.200 of Tenente Costantino Petrosellini,
92^a Squadriglia, 8° Gruppo, 2° Stormo,
Sarzana, August 1943



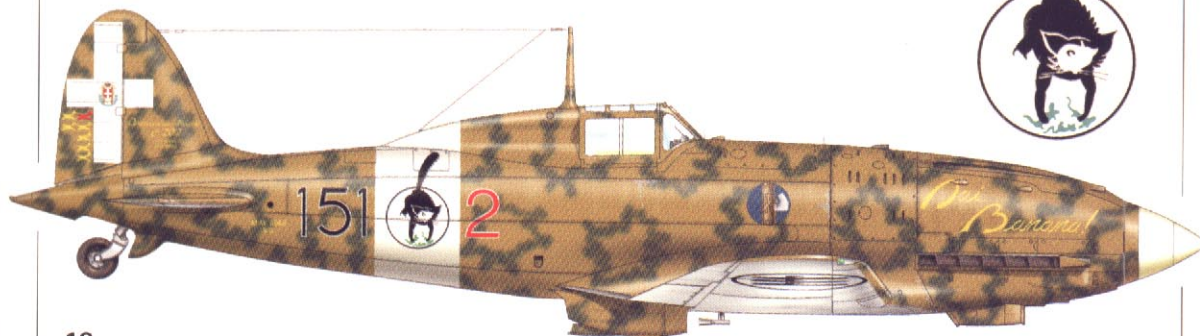
16

CR.42 of Tenente Luigi Torchio, 377^a Squadriglia
Autonoma, Palermo, February 1943



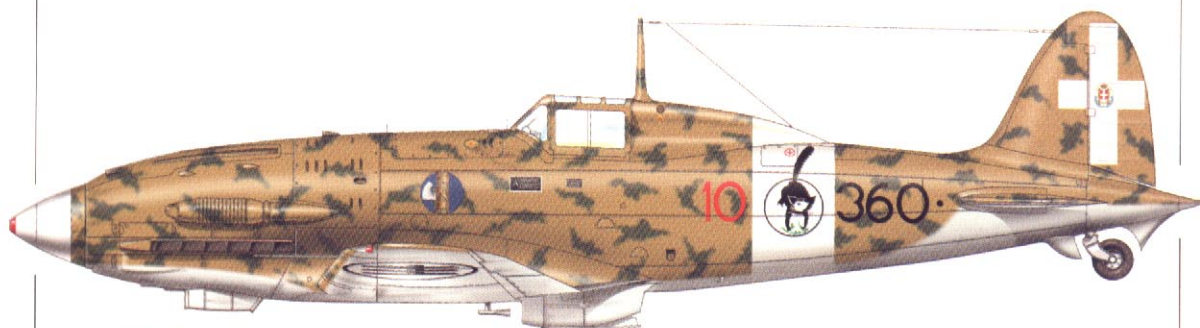
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C.202 Serie VII MM9042 of Capitano Furio Niclot Doglio, CO of 151^a Squadriglia, 20° Gruppo, 51° Stormo, Gela, 27 July 1942



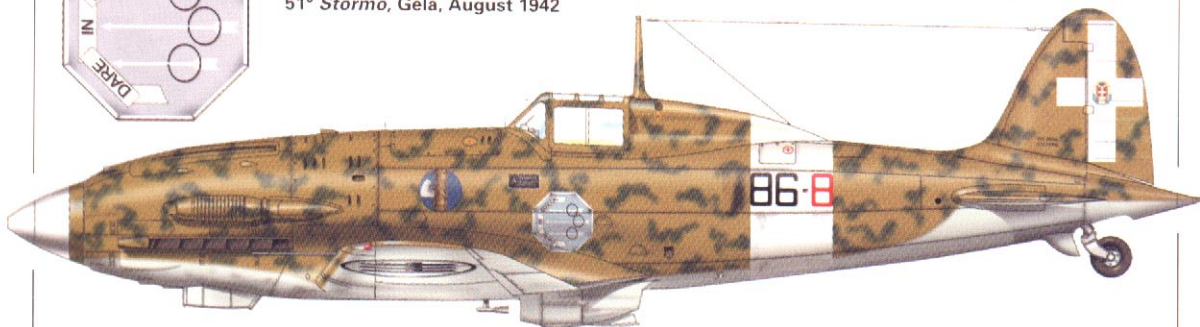
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C.202 Serie VII MM9066 of Maresciallo Ennio Tarantola, 151^a Squadriglia, 20° Gruppo, 51° Stormo, Gela, September 1942



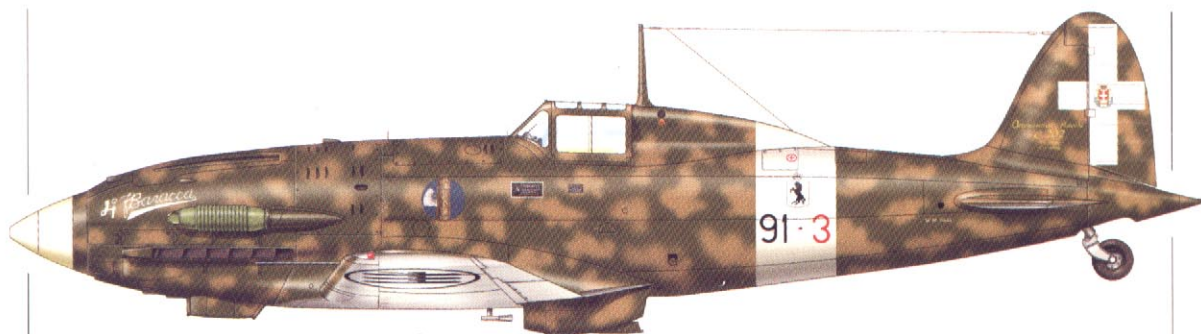
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C.202 Serie VI MM8339 of Capitano Carlo Miani, CO of 360^a Squadriglia, 155° Gruppo, 51° Stormo, Gela, August 1942



20

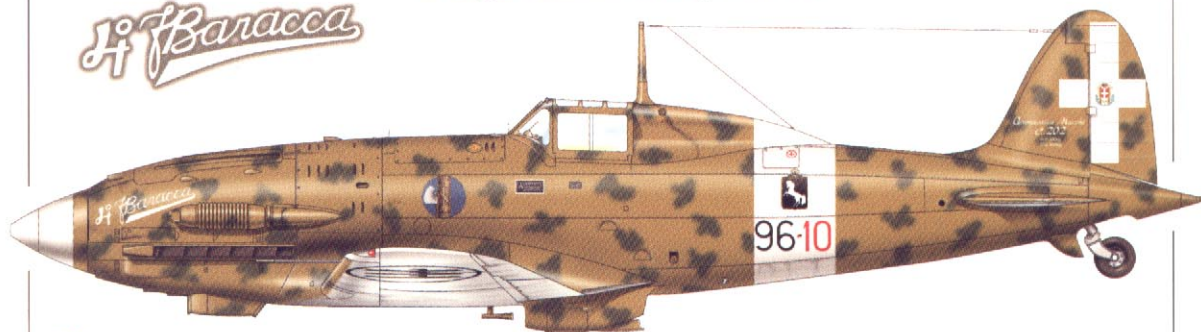
C.202 Serie I MM7944 of Tenente Adriano Visconti, 86^a Squadriglia, 7° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Pantelleria, May 1942



21

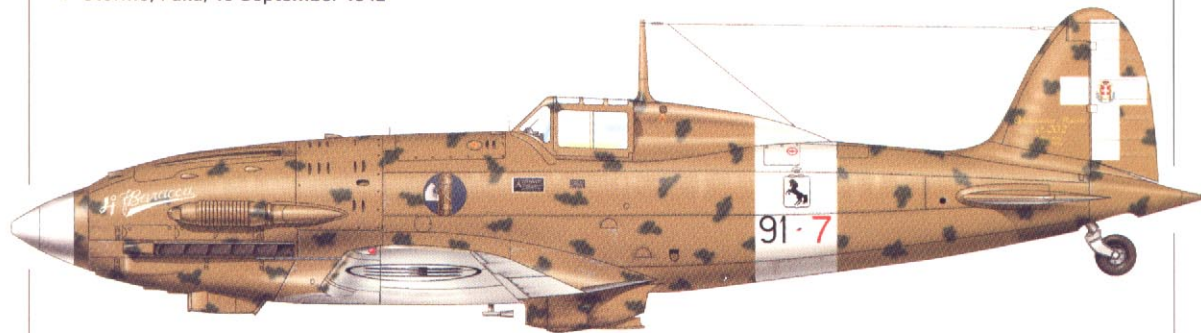
C.202 Serie III MM7844 of Capitano Carlo Maurizio Ruspoli, CO of 91^a Squadriglia, 10° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Fuka, September 1942

H. Baracca



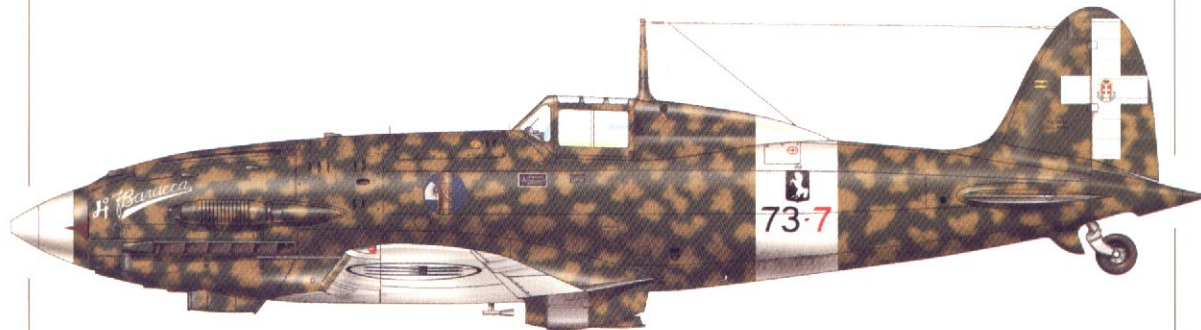
22

C.202 Serie III MM7821 of Tenente Emanuele Annoni, CO of 96^a Squadriglia, 9° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Fuka, 19 September 1942



23

C.202 Serie I MM7910 of Maresciallo Alessandro Bladelli, 91^a Squadriglia, 10° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Fuka, September 1942



24

C.202 Serie III MM7944 of Tenente Giulio Reiner, CO of 73^a Squadriglia, 9° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Fuka, August 1942

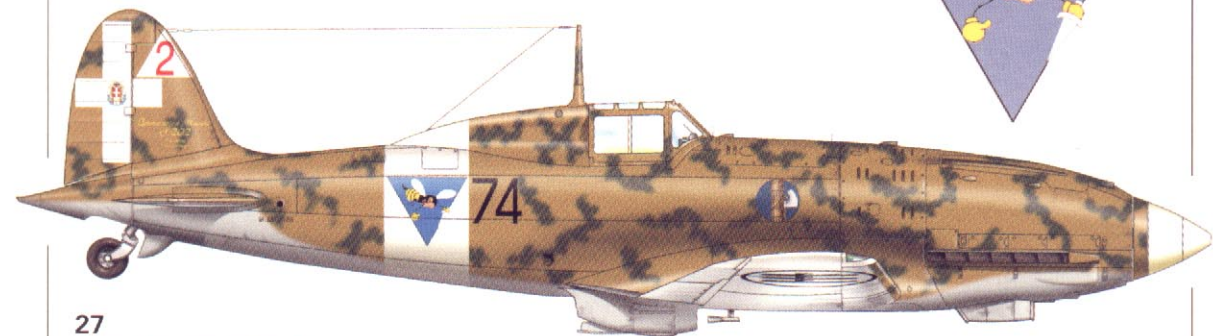


25

C.202 *Serie VII* MM9024(?) of Maggiore Luigi Filippi, CO of 23° Gruppo, 3° Stormo, Tunisia, January 1943

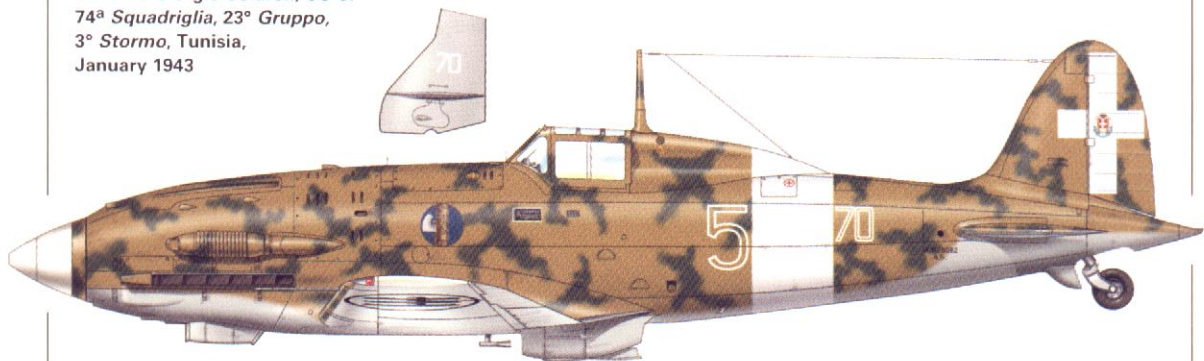
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C.202 *Serie III* of Sergente Maggiore Luigi Gorrini, 85ª Squadriglia, 18° Gruppo, 3° Stormo, Tunisia, January 1943



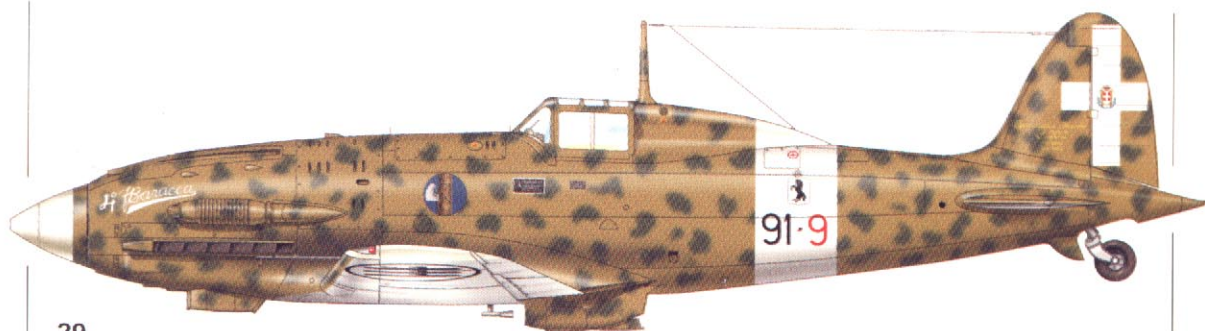
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C.202 *Serie I* MM7913(?) of Tenente Giorgio Solaroli, CO of 74ª Squadriglia, 23° Gruppo, 3° Stormo, Tunisia, January 1943



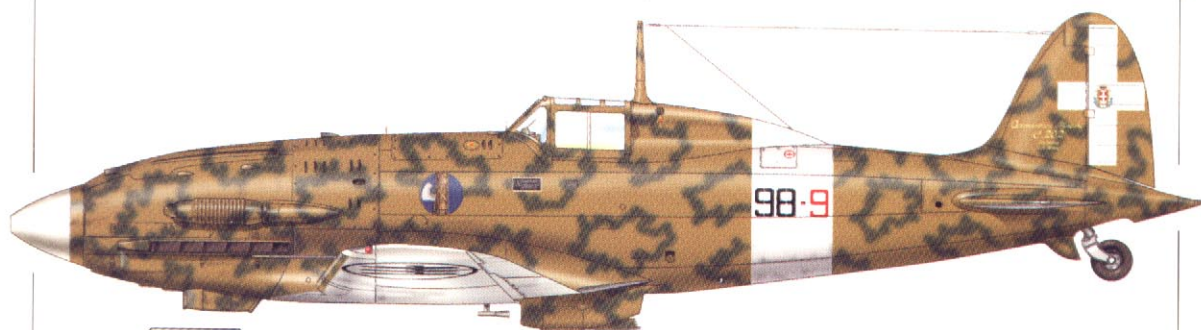
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C.202 *Serie X* of Capitano Claudio Solaro, CO of 70ª Squadriglia, 23° Gruppo, 3° Stormo, Tunisia, January 1943



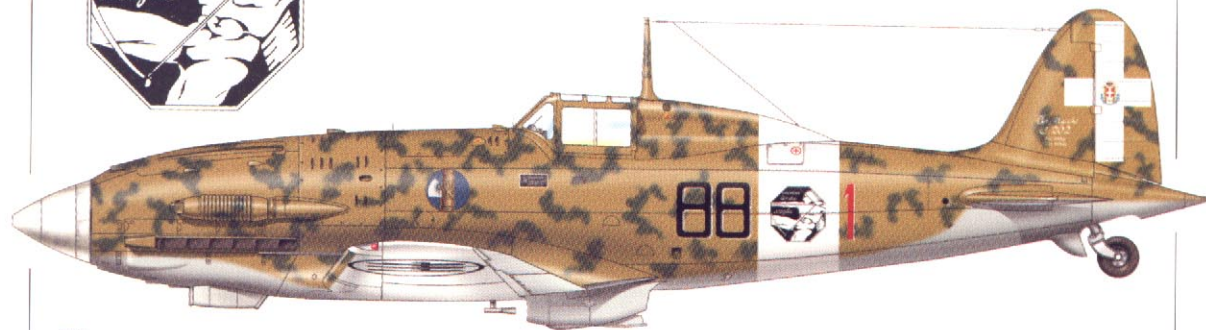
29

C.202 Serie III of Sottotenente Leonardo Ferrulli, 91^a Squadriglia, 10° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Fuka, October 1942



30

C.202 Serie IX of Sergente Maggiore Walter Omiccioli, 98^a Squadriglia, 7° Gruppo, 54° Stormo, Caselle, April 1943



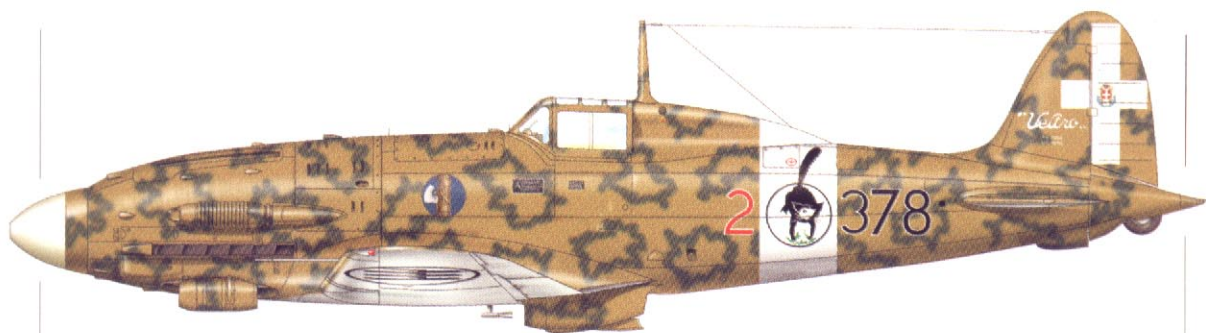
31

C.202 Serie X MM9570 of Capitano Dante Ocarso, CO of 88^a Squadriglia, 6° Gruppo, 1° Stormo, Decimomannu, November 1942



32

C.202 Serie IX MM9398 of Marisciallo GianLino Baschiroto, 88^a Squadriglia, 6° Gruppo, 1° Stormo, Pantelleria, December 1942



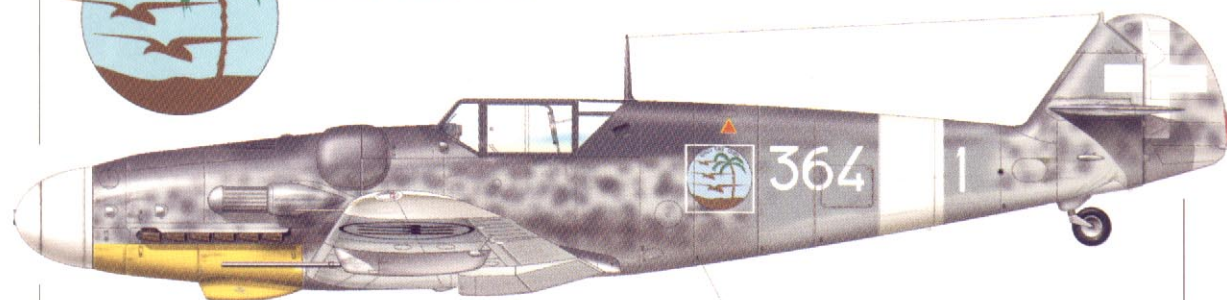
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C.205V Veltro Serie III MM92156 of Sergente Ferruccio Serafini, 378^a Squadriglia, 155° Gruppo Autonomo, Capoterra, 22 July 1943



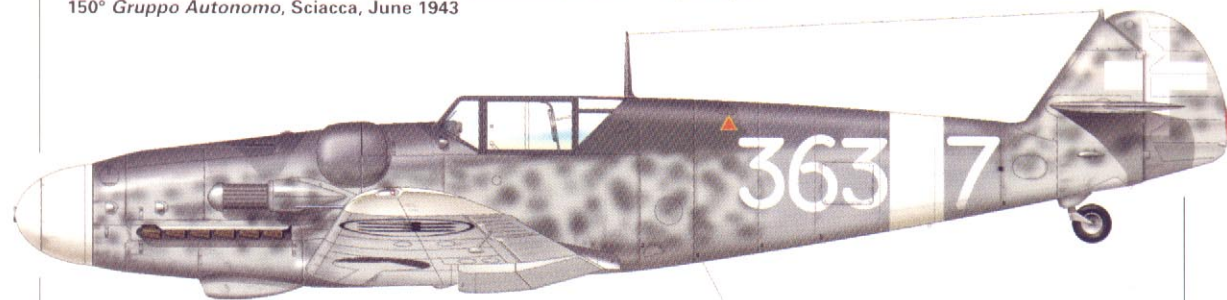
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C.202 Serie XI of Tenente Orfeo Mazzitelli, 359^a Squadriglia, 22° Gruppo Autonomo, Capodichino, August 1943



35

Bf 109G-6 Wk-Nr 18391 of Capitano Mario Bellagambi, CO of 364^a Squadriglia, 150° Gruppo Autonomo, Sciacca, June 1943

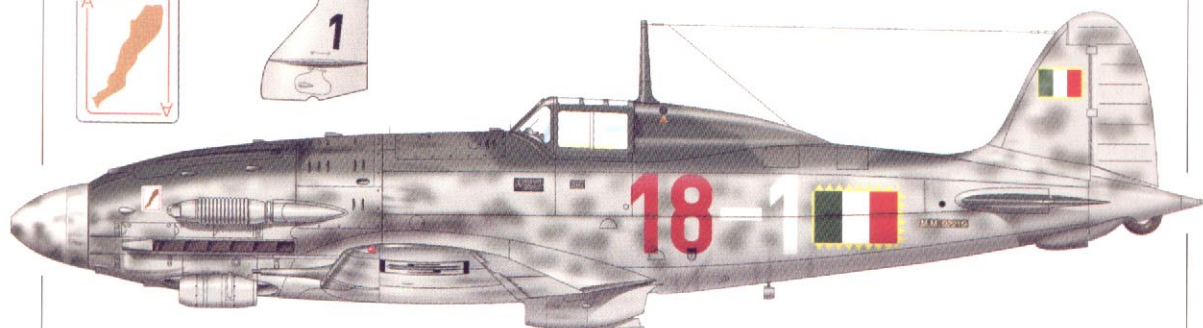


36

Bf 109G-6 Wk-Nr 18421 of Tenente Ugo Drago, CO of 363^a Squadriglia, 150° Gruppo Autonomo, Sciacca, June 1943

37

G.55 Serie I MM91065 probably flown by Capitano Giovanni Bonet, *Squadriglia Complementare Montefusco*, ANR, Venaria Reale, March 1944



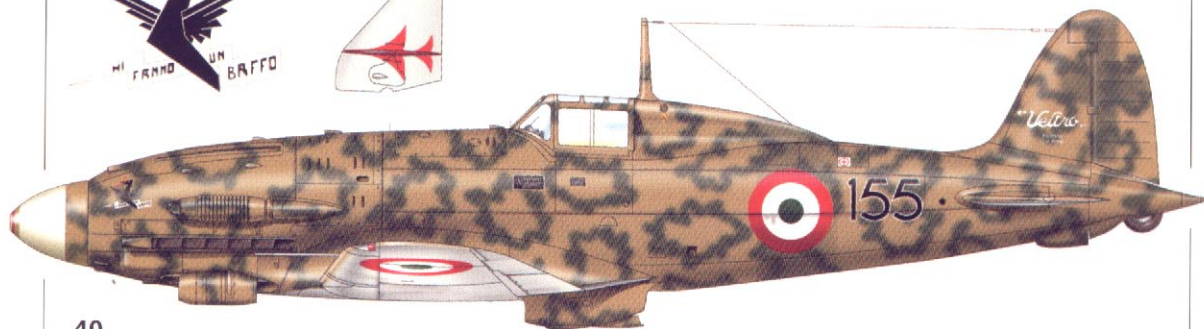
38

C.205V Veltro Serie III MM92287 of Capitano Adriano Visconti, CO of 1ª Squadriglia, 1º Gruppo Caccia, ANR, Campoformido, April 1944



39

Bf 109G-10/AS Wk-Nr 490379 of Maresciallo Attilio Sanson, 5ª Squadriglia, IIº Gruppo Caccia, ANR, Osoppo, 3 March 1945



40

C.205V Veltro Serie III of Tenente Colonnello Duilio Fanali, CO of 155º Gruppo, *Aeronautica Co-Belligerante*, Lecce, late 1943

1

CR.42 of Capitano Giorgio Graffer, CO of 365^a Squadriglia, 150^a Gruppo, 53^a Stormo, Caselle, summer 1940

This Fiat fighter is finished in the classic three-tone camouflage of the period – Verde (green), Marrone (brown) and Giallo Mimetic (yellow). Capitano Graffer was flying a CR.42 devoid of a radio and specialist nightfighter equipment when he successfully intercepted an RAF Whitley bomber over Turin on the night of 13/14 August 1940.

2

CR.42 of Tenente Mario Visintini, 412^a Squadriglia Autonoma, Gura, summer 1940

Again camouflaged in the standard three-tone scheme, this CR.42 lacks any specific East African theatre markings apart from the unit badge, which depicts a red prancing horse superimposed over a black map of Africa. This motif reflected the fact that many of the pilots within 412^a Squadriglia came from 4^a Stormo. The individual number worn by Visintini's CR.42 is the result of an educated guess on the part of the authors, as none of the photographs of his aircraft that have so far come to light show this area of the fuselage.

3

CR.42 of Sottotenente Franco Bordini Bisleri, 95^a Squadriglia, 18^a Gruppo, 3^a Stormo, Mirafiori, Summer 1940

The white spinner of Bisleri's fighter signified that it belonged to 95^a Squadriglia – 83^a and 85^a Squadriglia used red and green spinners respectively. In a rare early-war example of aircraft individualisation within the *Regia Aeronautica*, the ace had the word *ROBUR* painted on his fighter's headrest fairing in white. This was Bisleri's nickname, and it was derived from the advertising slogan of a famous liqueur produced by his family firm. Bisleri claimed five kills with the CR.42 in North Africa.

4

CR.42 of Maresciallo Felice Longhi, 95^a Squadriglia, 18^a Gruppo, 3^a Stormo, Mirafiori, Summer 1940

Longhi's CR.42 was a virtual mirror image of Bisleri's fighter, the two pilots often participating in the same missions during this early stage of the war in the west. The 18^a Gruppo 'Ocio che te copo' emblem is derived from the badge used by Squadriglia *Mitragliamento* ('strafing squadron') 'Frecce' of the Spanish war – Longhi had downed an I-15 while flying the CR.32 in the latter conflict. He used this particular CR.42 to shoot down a Blenheim in North Africa in 1941, followed by three kills with the C.202 and one with the C.205V.

5

C.200 of Sottotenente Franco Bordini Bisleri, 95^a Squadriglia, 18^a Gruppo, 3^a Stormo, Atene-Tatoi, October 1941

This C.200 is painted in the standard metropolitano (home front) scheme of Verde Oliva (Olive Green), the white fuselage band being applied to all Italian aircraft in November 1940. Received as a replacement for his CR.42 in the autumn

of 1941, this C.200 was immediately personalised by Bordini Bisleri. The ace failed to achieve any kills with this type.

6

C.200 of Tenente Franco Lucchini, 90^a Squadriglia, 10^a Gruppo, 4^a Stormo, Catania, August 1941

Lucchini's C.200 is seen in a typical *Regia Aeronautica* scheme of Giallo and Marrone Mimetic (yellow and brown) mottles over a Verde Mimetic (green) base. Most Macchi fighters wore this camouflage scheme during the spring-summer of 1941. The small red elephant painted beneath the cockpit was unique to aircraft of 90^a Squadriglia, whilst the prancing horse emblem belonged to 10^a Gruppo. Squadriglia markings were abolished from all 4^a Stormo aircraft during the course of 1942, and the Giallo Cromo (chrome yellow) engine cowling became standard throughout the *Regia Aeronautica* between March and October 1941. Lucchini claimed four victories in the C.200 over Malta between June and September 1941.

7

C.200 of Sottotenente Giuseppe Biron, 369^a Squadriglia, 22^a Gruppo Autonomo, Krivoj-Rog, September 1941

Flown by one of the most successful Italian pilots to see action on the Eastern Front, this C.200 is camouflaged in a two-tone scheme. It also features the yellow fuselage band and underside wingtips that were adopted as theatre markings to facilitate rapid recognition by fellow Axis pilots, and friendly troops on the ground. The unique 'scarecrow smoking red stars' marking was adopted by 22^a Gruppo as its emblem at Tirana prior to the unit arriving in Russia, the icon being created by Giuseppe Biron. Aside from achieving at least four individual kills in the USSR, Biron claimed a quartet of victories in August 1943 whilst flying a C.202 during the defence of Italy.

8

C.200 of Maggiore Ettore Foschini, CO of 21^a Gruppo Autonomo, Stalino, May 1942

Painted in a three-tone densely mottled scheme, this aircraft features a tail cross with spans of equal length – typical of the C.200s built under licence by Breda. The Roman numerals and rank pennant on the fuselage band indicate that the fighter was flown by the Gruppo Commander, Ettore Foschini. A veteran of the Spanish war (where he claimed one kill), Foschini scored five victories in Greece with the CR.42 whilst leading 24^a Gruppo's 355^a Squadriglia, followed by two kills in Russia with the C.200.

9

C.202 Serie II MM7712 of Sottotenente Jacopo Frigerio, 97^a Squadriglia, 9^a Gruppo, 4^a Stormo, Comiso, 30 September 1941

MM7712 was one of the first C.202s built by Aeromacchi (it bore construction number 4), and it was painted in a scheme much favoured by the Varese-based firm – superimposed mottling of Giallo and Marrone Mimetic over Verde Mimetic, with a yellow nose area as per official directives. This aircraft is adorned with the two unit markings then worn by all 9^a Gruppo fighters, namely the 'Cavallino Rampante' in white on a black shield on the fuselage and the 'Gamba di

Ferro' (iron leg) on the fin. Frigerio first flew MM7712 on 30 June 1941 when he ferried the fighter from Lonate Pozzolo to Gorizia. Upon moving to Comiso on 29 September, Frigerio claimed the type's very first victory (in this aircraft) the following day when he downed Hurricane II Z5265 of No 185 Sqn during a raid on the *gruppo's* new home. The fighter crashed off the Sicilian coast, and although its pilot (Pit Off D W Lintern) bailed out, he was never found. MM7712, which was later fitted with cameras, enjoyed a long career as a reconnaissance aircraft, serving with 54° *Stormo* (and flown by Adriano Visconti) and 377^a *Squadriglia Autonoma* (where it was used by another ace, Luigi Torchio) at Palermo.

10

C.202 Serie III MM7742 of Tenente Emanuele Annoni, 96^a Squadriglia, 9° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Comiso, 14 October 1941

Near identical to MM7712, this aircraft wears the codes of fellow 9° *Gruppo* unit 96^a *Squadriglia*, which was also based at Comiso in the autumn of 1941. Nine-kill ace Annoni had to nurse this fighter back to base on 14 October 1941 after it was struck by two cannon shells fired by the No 185 Sqn Hurricane II flown by five-kill ace Pit Off David Barnwell. Malta's leading nightfighter pilot, Barnwell was in turn shot down and killed moments later by a second 96^a *Squadriglia* C.202. MM7742 was subsequently repaired over a number of months and assigned to 54° *Stormo* in April 1942.

11

C.202 Serie III MM7720 of Capitano Franco Lucchini, CO of 84^a Squadriglia, 10° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Fuka, September 1942

This aircraft had originally served with 1° *Stormo* in an overall Verde Scuro scheme, although it was later repainted with large patches of Giallo Mimetico to render it less visible against the desert environment of North Africa. By this stage in its long career, the fighter had had its starboard wing replaced by a flying surface from a later C.202, which was painted in standard 'smoke ring' mottles of Verde Oliva over Nocciola Chiaro (light chestnut). The emblem worn on the fuselage stripe belonged to 10° *Gruppo*, while the stylised signature of Francesco Baracca (Italy's 'ace of aces' during World War I) adorned the noses of all 4° *Stormo* C.202s from the end of March 1942 onwards. Assigned to 84^a *Squadriglia* in early September 1942, MM7720 was almost certainly used by Capitano Lucchini during the numerous combat missions he flew as part of the El Alamein campaign. He also saw action at the controls of several other C.202s during this period, including MM7919 '84-12', which he crash-landed on 24 October 1942 following combat.

12

C.202 Serie III MM7764 of Sergente Maggiore Teresio Martinoli, 73^a Squadriglia, 9° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Gela, July 1942

Originally delivered to 1° *Stormo*, this aircraft was transferred to 73^a *Squadriglia* at the end of June 1942. Painted in the regulation scheme specified for operations in the 'colonies', the C.202's overall base colour is Giallo Mimetico, with Verde Mimetico mottling. Its nose and wingtips have been marked in white, which was the standard recognition colour for the

North African theatre. By this stage of the war 9° *Gruppo's* white horse emblem had been repositioned on the white fuselage band, while the 'Gamba di Ferro' had been eliminated from the fin altogether. Martinoli also frequently used other C.202s whilst in North Africa (including '73-7', which was usually flown by fellow ace Giulio Reiner), depending on the serviceability of his own 'personal' aircraft.

13

G.50bis of Sergente Maggiore Aldo Buvoli, 378^a Squadriglia, 155° Gruppo Autonomo, Castel Benito, 9 July 1941

Featuring a yellow engine cowling, which was synonymous with this period (March–October 1941), Buvoli's Fiat is painted in a mixed camouflage scheme of Verde and Giallo Mimetico. As with most G.50s, the white tail cross extends over its fin and rudder. Buvoli took-off alone in this aircraft on the evening of 9 July 1941 to patrol over Tripoli harbour, and duly intercepted seven Blenheims sent to attack shipping in the area. Diving on the bombers as they performed a low-level attack on the port, he chased the formation out to sea, firing at each one of them in sequence. Buvoli was subsequently credited with four kills, No 110 Sqn reporting the loss of a similar number of Blenheim IVs on its very first mission since arriving in Malta from the UK in early July.

14

Re.2001 of Tenente Agostino Celentano, 150^a Squadriglia, 2° Gruppo Autonomo, San Pietro di Caltagirone, May 1942

As with most Re.2001s, this aircraft is painted Verde Oliva Scuro (dark olive green) overall, with Grigio Azzurro Chiaro (light blue grey) undersides. Enjoying more success than most with the Reggiane fighter, Celentano was credited with six victories over Malta – his only other kill was claimed in North Africa the previous year whilst flying a G.50.

15

C.200 of Tenente Costantino Petrosellini, 92^a Squadriglia, 8° Gruppo, 2° Stormo, Sarzana, August 1943

This C.200 again exhibits the standard home front scheme of dark olive green upper surfaces and light blue grey undersides. In accordance with instructions issued by the Air Ministry on 29 July 1943, all fasces markings were removed following the fall of Mussolini's government on 25 July. Petrosellini claimed four of his five victories whilst flying this aircraft, with the most significant of these being the B-17 which he forced down into the sea off the Tyrrhenian coast on 3 September 1943. This was not only one of the last kills claimed by the *Regia Aeronautica*, but almost certainly the last for the C.200.

16

CR.42 of Tenente Luigi Torchio, 377^a Squadriglia Autonoma, Palermo, February 1943

Although painted black overall for night operations, this aircraft inexplicably retained its white fuselage band – this was usually painted out on CR.42 nightfighters. The *squadriglia's* specialised mission is well reflected in its choice of unit emblem. The need for nightfighters had been all but ignored in Italy pre-war, and attempts to remedy this situation

through the introduction of suitable aircraft, and training, only really came into effect during the final months of the conflict. Luigi Torchio was one of just a handful of Italian fighter pilots to achieve night kills, his first taking the form of a Wellington downed over Palermo whilst flying a CR.42 on the night of 21/22 February 1943. He was subsequently credited with three victories flying C.202 '377-1' and one in a C.200.

17

C.202 Serie VII MM9042 of Capitano Furio Niclot Doglio, CO of 151^a Squadriglia, 20^o Gruppo, 51^o Stormo, Gela, 27 July 1942

This aircraft is painted in a scheme devised by Aermacchi for 'colonial' use, featuring Nocciola Chiaro (light chestnut) and Verde Oliva Scuro (dark olive green) upper surfaces. This camouflage pattern had been introduced from the spring of 1942, the company applying a base coat of light chestnut to all upper surfaces, over which were sprayed irregular rings (sometimes referred to as 'smoke rings') of dark olive green. Propeller spinners on all Italian aircraft were invariably painted white during this period, although no official specifications were ever issued to confirm this. 51^o Stormo's famous 'black cat and green mice' emblem was carried on the fuselage band, forward of which MM9042 also boasted a rare command pennant. This identified the pilot as being a *squadriglia* commander, and was applied in conjunction with the individual aircraft number '1'. This particular C.202 had a short operational life, being ferried from Aermacchi to Ciampino on 16 June 1942, before arriving at Gela on the 24th. It was shot down over Malta on 27 July by Canadian ace George 'Buzz' Beurling, Capitano Doglio being killed when the fighter blew up in mid-air. The latter had achieved six victories over Malta in just twelve days prior to his demise.

18

C.202 Serie VII MM9066 of Maresciallo Ennio Tarantola, 151^a Squadriglia, 20^o Gruppo, 51^o Stormo, Gela, September 1942

As with Capitano Doglio's '151-1', this aircraft sports Aermacchi's factory scheme of the period. Note that the 51^o Stormo badge appears to be larger on MM9066, and that the pilot's personal marking only appeared on the cowlings' starboard side. The exhortation *Dai Banana!* ('Go for it Banana') refers to Tarantola's nickname, which harked back to his days as a fruit vendor. MM9066 was the second '151-2' used by the ace over Malta, the first (MM9032) being lost on 14 August 1942 whilst being flown by Capitano Egeo Pittoni, who took to his parachute after the Macchi had been shot up by a No 1435 Sqn Spitfire V flown by future Canadian ace Flt Sgt Ian MacLennan. MM9066 features seven kill markings on its rudder, dating the profile to September 1942. At that time, Tarantola's tally included a P-40 shot down in North Africa, three personal Spitfire kills, plus two shared over Malta with Niclot, and a single I-15 from the ace's time in Spain (this marking was applied in red). Rarely seen on Italian fighters, victory symbols usually took the form of aircraft silhouettes.

19

C.202 Serie VI MM8339 of Capitano Carlo Miani, CO of 360^a Squadriglia, 155^o Gruppo, 51^o Stormo, Gela, August 1942

The very first Serie VI C.202, this Breda-built aircraft is camouflaged in the scheme favoured by the manufacturer – small, elongated Verde Oliva mottling over a Nocciola Chiaro base. Note the demarcation line between the camouflaged upper surfaces and the Grigio Azzurro Chiaro undersurfaces, the latter extending under the engine cowlings, radiator and rear fuselage, rising up to the horizontal tail surfaces. A one-kill veteran of the Spanish war, future ace Carlo Miani downed three Spitfires over Malta in June 1942, although he was forced to abandon MM8339 and take to his parachute on 14 July due to chronic mechanical failure.

20

C.202 Serie I MM7944 of Tenente Adriano Visconti, 86^a Squadriglia, 7^o Gruppo, 4^o Stormo, Pantelleria, May 1942

Built in March 1942, and subsequently modified for photo-reconnaissance operations, MM7944 was initially assigned to 168^a Squadriglia (16^o Gruppo, 54^o Stormo), before being passed on to 7^o Gruppo on 21 April. Although camouflaged in a typical Breda scheme, the fighter's 'Dare in Brocca' ('Hit with Precision') emblem was probably unique to MM7944. Visconti, who was assigned to 7^o Gruppo's 76^a Squadriglia, frequently put his 'photo-recce' experience to good use at the controls of this machine. It is almost certain that he also used MM7944 to obtain his first victory (a Blenheim) during the Battle of Pantelleria on 15 June 1942.

21

C.202 Serie III MM7844 of Capitano Carlo Maurizio Ruspoli, CO of 91^a Squadriglia, 10^o Gruppo, 4^o Stormo, Fuka, September 1942

For much of World War 2, Prince Ruspoli flew aircraft equipped with ciné cameras, and C.202 '91-3' was no exception, boasting a small camera fitted in the leading edge of the starboard wing. Flown for the first time on 31 March 1942, MM7844 was painted in a scheme near-identical to that worn by Martinoli's '73-4' (profile 12), although in this instance Ruspoli's C.202 had the colours reversed – the mottling was applied in Nocciola Chiaro over a Verde Oliva Scuro base. The fighter's primer-coloured air filter denotes that this is a replacement item fitted 'in the field'.

22

C.202 Serie III MM7821 of Tenente Emanuele Annoni, CO of 96^a Squadriglia, 9^o Gruppo, 4^o Stormo, Fuka, 19 September 1942

From the same production batch as Ruspoli's aircraft, this C.202 has both a 9^o Gruppo emblem on its fuselage band and a stylised 4^o F Baracca marking on its nose. Considered by Annoni to be both well trimmed and balanced, MM7821 was the ideal candidate to be 'loaned' to German ace Hans-Joachim Marseille on 19 September 1942 when he visited 4^o Stormo. Although a brilliant fighter pilot, Marseille's limited knowledge of Italian aircraft was graphically revealed when he mistakenly cut the engine during his final approach to Fuka and was forced to belly-land the C.202.

23

C.202 Serie I MM7910 of Maresciallo Alessandro Bladelli, 91^a Squadriglia, 10^o Gruppo, 4^o Stormo, Fuka, September 1942

Compared with other 4° *Stormo* C.202s in North Africa at this time, MM7910 has only sparse mottling. Retiring as a general from the postwar Italian air force, Bladelli fought throughout World War 2 with 4° *Stormo*, achieving at least five personal victories in North Africa and sharing in three others. He was also credited with one of the few German aircraft downed after the Armistice, claiming a Ju 52/3m on 23 October 1943 in conjunction with fellow ace Tenente Giuseppe Ferrazani.

24

C.202 Serie III MM7944 of Tenente Giulio Reiner, CO of 73ª Squadriglia, 9° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Fuka, August 1942

This aircraft features a scheme near identical to that applied to Carlo Rispoli's C.202 (profile 21). Note that MM7944 has white wingtips to denote its assignment to the North African theatre. Barely visible on its fin are two kill markings.

25

C.202 Serie VII MM9024(?) of Maggiore Luigi Filippi, CO of 23° Gruppo, 3° Stormo, Tunisia, January 1943

Filippi's C.202 displays an unusual version of the 'smoke ring' scheme that saw the elongated 'rings' connected to form an overall net pattern. The white '75' indicates the *squadriglia* to which the Macchi fighter belonged, while the fuselage pennant denotes the rank of its pilot. The 'Vespa Arrabiata' ('angry wasp') emblem was adopted by 3° *Stormo* when the previously autonomous 18° and 23° *Gruppi* merged in 1942.

26

C.202 Serie III of Sergente Maggiore Luigi Gorrini, 85ª Squadriglia, 18° Gruppo, 3° Stormo, Tunisia, January 1943

Wearing standard Aermacchi camouflage, this C.202 was transferred from 3° to 4° *Stormo* in November 1942. Luigi Gorrini frequently flew the aircraft in combat during the Italian retreat from Libya to Tunisia, shooting down a P-40 and a Spitfire with it in January 1943.

27

C.202 Serie I MM7913(?) of Tenente Giorgio Solaroli, CO of 74ª Squadriglia, 23° Gruppo, 3° Stormo, Tunisia, January 1943

Solaroli flew this aircraft when he assumed command of 74ª *Squadriglia*, scoring at least two victories with it in 1942. The fighter features a typical Breda colour scheme, with elongated patches of green mottling. 3° *Stormo*'s emblem was carried on the white fuselage band, and for a short while aircraft from 74ª *Squadriglia* also had their individual number applied within a white triangle on the fin.

28

C.202 Serie X of Capitano Claudio Solaro, CO of 70ª Squadriglia, 23° Gruppo, 3° Stormo, Tunisia, January 1943

Near-identical to Solaroli's C.202, this aircraft does not carry the *gruppo* emblem, however. The units controlled by 3° *Stormo* each adopted their own style of numerical markings, and in the case of 70ª *Squadriglia*, its numbering was painted in outline only, with the individual aircraft number twice the size of the unit number. Solaro obtained his last victories in North Africa flying this particular C.202 – the ace claimed eight kills in less than three months in 1942-43.

29

C.202 Serie III of Sottotenente Leonardo Ferrulli, 91ª Squadriglia, 10° Gruppo, 4° Stormo, Fuka, October 1942

Ferrulli's C.202 is camouflaged in a standard Aermacchi scheme of small green mottles on a Nocciola Chiaro base – the latter shade may be Giallo Mimetico, which was a slightly lighter colour which replaced Nocciola Chiaro in the spring of 1942. Like many other aces of the North African campaign, Ferrulli flew a number of aircraft from this unit.

30

C.202 Serie IX of Sergente Maggiore Walter Omiccioli, 98ª Squadriglia, 7° Gruppo, 54° Stormo, Caselle, April 1943

This C.202 was built by Aermacchi and assigned to 7° *Gruppo* on the eve of its transfer to Tunisia – 54° *Stormo* became the last unit to leave African soil prior to the Axis surrender of 13 May 1943. Omiccioli scored his last two kills in Tunisia with this C.202, which bore his personal inscription, 'La Giulia longa ales i maron', on its starboard side.

31

C.202 Serie X MM9570 of Capitano Dante Ocarso, CO of 88ª Squadriglia, 6° Gruppo, 1° Stormo, Decimomannu, November 1942

Having claimed five P-40s in North Africa, Ocarso was to lose his life after ditching MM9570 in the Mediterranean in the wake of a strafing mission to Bône, on the Algerian coast, on 28 November 1942. Although he successfully vacated the fighter (which had only been delivered to the unit 18 days earlier), the ace had died from exposure by the time he was found adrift in his dinghy by fishermen ten days later.

32

C.202 Serie IX MM9398 of Marisciallo GianLino Baschirotto, 88ª Squadriglia, 6° Gruppo, 1° Stormo, Pantelleria, December 1942

This machine was delivered directly to 1° *Stormo*'s Ciampino base from the Aermacchi factory on 13 November 1942, where it was adorned with the unit's distinctive 'Arciere' (archer) emblem and the motto 'Incocca tende scaglia' (a quote from D'Annunzio). This C.202 was used by six-kill ace Baschirotto during the series of long-range missions flown by the unit over Algeria from bases in Sardinia, these sorties being performed in an effort to counter the *Torch* landings.

33

C.205V Veltro Serie III MM92156 of Sergente Ferruccio Serafini, 378ª Squadriglia, 155° Gruppo Autonomo, Capoterra, 22 July 1943

Aermacchi's characteristic C.202 camouflage scheme was also used on the Veltro, this particular machine being the fourth *Serie III* airframe completed. Following its delivery to 51° *Stormo* at Ciampino on 7 July 1943, MM92156 transferred to Sardinia with the unit. Seven-kill ace Serafini lost his life in this machine on 22 July during an engagement with P-40s from the 325th FG, although he succeeded in downing two of his opponents prior to his demise.

34

C.202 Serie XI of Tenente Orfeo Mazzitelli, 359ª Squadriglia, 22° Gruppo Autonomo, Capodichino, August 1943

Although this aircraft boasts a 'colonial' colour scheme, it was actually employed by 22° *Gruppo Autonomo* on home defence duties. Unlike other aircraft within this unit, this particular C.202 was not decorated with the 'scarecrow' emblem on its fuselage band. Eight-kill ace Mazzitelli achieved success with this fighter whilst defending Naples, downing six four-engined bombers during the course of 1943.

35

Bf 109G-6 Wk-Nr 18391 of Capitano Mario Bellagambi, CO of 364^a Squadriglia, 150° Gruppo Autonomo, Sciacca, June 1943

Delivered to the *Regia Aeronautica* in the spring of 1943, this aircraft is camouflaged in standard Luftwaffe colours of the period, namely RLM 74 and 75 upper surfaces, with mottles of the same colours over RLM 76 fuselage sides. The latter colour was also used for the undersurfaces, except for the yellow area beneath the engine cowling. Factory-applied German crosses were painted over with grey paint and replaced by Italian markings soon after the aircraft's arrival at Ciampino, although fuselage decals for the fasces, as well as the State emblem on the tail cross, were never applied. As with all other Bf 109s within this unit, the fighter wears the famous 150° *Gruppo Autonomo* 'Gigi Tre Osei' emblem within a white square ahead of its *squadriglia* number. Bellagambi flew numerous missions with this aircraft, sharing in the destruction of a B-24 on 30 June 1943. Wk-Nr 18391 was discovered by invading Allied forces in an unuseable condition at Sciacca just days later.

36

Bf 109G-6 Wk-Nr 18421 of Tenente Ugo Drago, CO of 363^a Squadriglia, 150° Gruppo Autonomo, Sciacca, June 1943

Although camouflaged near-identically to Bellagambi's Bf 109, this aircraft lacked the yellow theatre marking beneath its cowling. As with Bellagambi's *Gustav*, this fighter was found in a severely damaged state at Sciacca by the Allies. Most of Drago's fighters were marked with the number 7, and he ended the war flying Bf 109G-10 'Black 7' with II° *Gruppo Caccia*'s 4^a *Squadriglia*.

37

G.55 Serie I MM91065 probably flown by Capitano Giovanni Bonet, Squadriglia Complementare Montefusco, ANR, Venaria Reale, March 1944

One of the few units to use the G.55 operationally during World War 2, *Squadriglia Complementare Montefusco* (later *Montefusco Bonet*) experienced a short but intense campaign prior to merging with II° *Gruppo Caccia*. It features Verde Oliva Scuro upper surfaces and Grigio Azzurro Chiaro undersides. The new ANR markings adopted in January 1944 are also visible, these consisting of a tri-coloured flag bordered by yellow triangles. Wing markings (in this instance carried on the upper surfaces only) consisted of two black fasces, one facing forward and one rear, within a square black border. This aircraft had initially been operated by the Luftwaffe in the wake of the Italian Armistice of 8 September, the ANR having to crudely paint out the fuselage crosses and rudder swastikas following the fighter's return to their service in early 1944. Bonet had almost certainly flown this aircraft prior to his death on 29 March 1944 when, after claiming a

B-17, he was shot down by American ace 'Herky' Green of the 325th FG. Bonet had been credited with at least seven victories (some sources claim eleven) whilst flying with the *Regia Aeronautica* during the summer of 1943.

38

C.205V Veltro Serie III MM92287 of Capitano Adriano Visconti, CO of 1^a Squadriglia, I° Gruppo Caccia, ANR, Campofornido, April 1944

This ANR C.205V was camouflaged in a Luftwaffe-inspired scheme consisting of two greys for the upper surfaces and side mottling, with light blue-grey undersides. Its detail markings were also standard for the period – ANR flashes on the fuselage and fin, 1^a *Squadriglia* 'Asso di Bastoni' ('Ace of Clubs') emblem on the nose, and the unit number repeated on the main undercarriage doors. It was uncommon for pilots flying with I° *Gruppo Caccia* to be assigned personal aircraft, and apart from this machine, Visconti also flew '23-1' and '3-1', amongst others, during the early months of 1944.

39

Bf 109G-10/AS Wk-Nr 490379 of Maresciallo Attilio Sanson, 5^a Squadriglia, II° Gruppo Caccia, ANR, Osoppo, 3 March 1945

Camouflaged in standard Luftwaffe colours, this *Gustav* features the distinctive 'Diavolo Rosso' ('Red Devil') badge of 2^a (later 5^a) *Squadriglia*, commanded by Mario Bellagambi, on its nose. Again following German practice, a black spiral was introduced to the previously all white spinners of the Italian Bf 109Gs in July 1944. Aircraft of II° *Gruppo Caccia* normally carried dual national markings (except for the swastika). Maresciallo Sanson was wounded, and this Bf 109 written off, during an attack on USAAF bombers on 13 March 1945.

40

C.205V Veltro Serie III of Tenente Colonnello Duilio Fanali, CO of 155° Gruppo, Aeronautica Co-Belligerante, Lecce, late 1943

Even though Fanali does not appear in our list of aces (his log book only records two individual victories, apart from 33 shared kills during 1942 alone), his story certainly warrants inclusion. He commanded 155° *Gruppo* through to the Armistice, then led the *Aeronautica Co-Belligerante*'s 51° *Stormo*. Post-war, he was head of the *Stato Maggiore* between 1968 and 1971. His C.205V was camouflaged in a typical 'smoke ring' scheme of the period, with heavy areas of retouching denoting the position of previous *Regia Aeronautica* markings – especially around the white fuselage band and the tail cross. The number '155' indicated the *gruppo* commanded by Fanali, while the arrow on the fighter's mainwheel cover (peculiar to this unit) indicated his grade of Maggiore – he was subsequently promoted to Tenente Colonnello due to his previous military service with the *Regia Aeronautica*. Although the propeller spinner colours are hypothetical, Fanali's personal marking, carried on the nose, has been documented. It consisted of a stylised dragon and the motto 'Mi Fanno un Baffo' ('I just don't care'), the emblem tracing its history back to Fanali's service in Spain where he commanded 65^a *Squadriglia Assalto*, which flew similarly-decorated Ba.65s. It also appeared on the CR.32s of 160^a *Squadriglia*, which he led in North Africa.